The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team

Uintah High School
1880 West 500 North
Vernal, Utah 84078

April 3-4, 2003

Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

Uintah High School
1880 West 500 North
Vernal, Utah 84078

April 3-4, 2003

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Steven O. Laing, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate inservice growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 3-4, 2003, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of Uintah High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Dixie Allen is commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for Uintah High School students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of Uintah High School.

Steven O. Laing, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

UINTAH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dennis Stevens.. Vice President
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Marlin Johnson.. Coordinator ATE
Larry Klein...Director Human Resources
Anna LeFevre... Coordinator Special Education
Maurine Luck... Specialist Literacy
Lisa McCarrell .... Coordinator Maintenance
John Nielson..Coordinator Technology
AJ Pease .... Director Student Services
Leonard Sullivan... Director Curriculum & Instruction
J. Randall Upton...Business Administrator

UINTAH HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Dixie Allen..Principal
Mark Dockins... Assistant Principal
Jayme .... Assistant Principal

Counseling

Jenifer Gudac ....Counselor

Support Staff

Charlene McBride.. Front Office Secretary
Peggy Marshall ....Finance Secretary
Lesha Hacking... Attendance Secretary
Millie Clement ....Registrar
Debbie Lamoreaux..Counseling Secretary
Sheila Belcher .... Media Aide

Faculty

Thad Bainbridge	Teresa Harrison	Mike Peterson
Kay Baker	Richard Henderson	Myrna Philipp
Frank Barker	Katy Hunsaker	Chris Piner
Linda Bartel	Fred Hunting	Kristi Putman
Carl Belcher	Shanon Johnson	Kari Ann Raddon
Ed Browning	Linda Kurtenbach	Bill Reese
Dirk Collett	Brent Labrum	Sharon Shipton
Joleen Cottrell	Marlene Lake	Ingrid Smith
Kevin Dickson	Shane Lance	Fred Spencer
Hollis Dixon	Elaine Limb	Carolyn Squires
Tom Elder	Gil Limb	Renee Steele
Shannon Flatt	Scott Mansfield	Gregg Stensgard
Marsha Forsgren	Nancy Mardo	Jeff Taniguchi
Ray Forsgren	Keith McMullin	Brock Thorne
Gary Galley	Linda Mock	Loren Webb
Lori Gillman	Kenny Mohar	Cheya Weber
Lyle Gillman	Mary Moulton	Julie Wilde
Jacky Gray	Gary Muir	Dave Wilson
Annette Hadlock	Wade Olsen	Sarah Young
Reed Hansen	Peggy Patton	

UINTAH HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

Helping students prepare themselves for success in a changing world.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

Uintah High School believes:

- Every student can learn, achieve and succeed.

- Students can become life-long learners and productive citizens.

- Each of us should feel safe and respected.

- Clear goals, high expectations and accountability for all.

- Parent and community involvement is critical to student success.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Gwen Callahan, Emery High School, Emery School District
    Visiting Team Chairperson

Edward J. Attryde, Roosevelt Jr. High School, Duchesne School District

Gary Turner, Wasatch High School, Wasatch School District

Beverly Safely, Altamont High School, Duschesne School District

Karen Bishop, San Rafael Jr. High School, Emery School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

UINTAH HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

The profile of Uintah High School was a study of the school's role in the community and of programs offered by the school, and included a wide range of data. Uintah High School is the only comprehensive high school in Uintah County. It serves 1,249 students in grades 10-12.

a)   *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of their profile?*

     It is obvious to the Visiting Team that the faculty and staff made an exemplary effort to honestly look at their data and NSSE rubrics and rate themselves. They know where they are and have a viable improvement plan. This faculty and staff worked very hard on their profile. Based on this analysis, they have acknowledged a large group of 10th grade boys who are not performing. They have realized that their senior girl dropout rate is increasing and that their overall test scores are remaining about the same.

b)   *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

     The lines of inquiry used were credible, though limited. The department DRSLs are credible, though not in direct alignment to the overall school DRSLs. There is also a weakness in the community buy-in to participating in this process. The focus groups struggled to keep the parent group involved. Consideration should be given to expanding the information for analysis. The school's lines of inquiry need to be expanded, and other sources of information need to be considered.

<u>Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:</u>

- Examine attendance records for failing students.

- Conduct school climate surveys.

- Investigate community partners (the school has difficulty getting and keeping the community involved).

- Truancy records seem to be a problem at this school.

- Parent surveys were not done.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

a)   *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The school has difficulty in engaging the community. People who agree to serve on committees serve for a short time and don't follow through with the process. The groups are constantly changing, and even though that is not necessarily a drawback, it is hard to see continuity.

b)   *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The Visiting Team feels that this school's faculty and staff did a commendable job of looking critically at themselves. They have a good understanding of where they are according to the information they used. Broader and deeper lines of inquiry would help to project a more accurate picture, however.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Uintah High School has identified three goals (desired results for student learning) in areas they felt need improvement. These desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

1. Effective communicators who will
    - read, write, speak and listen competently and critically.
    - express themselves in a variety of media which could include art, music, dance, theater, foreign languages and/or public speaking.

2. Critical thinkers who will
    - identify problems, find solutions and evaluate consequences.
    - adapt to changing conditions.
    - analyze and critically evaluate information sources.
    - access/apply technology to solve problems and make decisions.
    - use a multiple of strategies and applications of academic knowledge to solve a variety of problems.

3. Life-long learners who will
    - use technology to access, process and deliver information.
    - think in international and historical contexts.
    - assess personal efforts.
    - work in groups as well as individually.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

a)   *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

The administration and faculty have been involved in defining the school's beliefs and mission statement. However, it appears that students and other stakeholders have had limited input in determining this direction for the school. The currently adopted mission statement has been in place for approximately six years. Focus groups tried to revise the mission statement, but faculty members believed the existing statement best stated the direction of the school. Although faculty had input into the writing of the mission statement and beliefs, there is not yet a shared belief that it provides a clear and compelling direction for the school. Currently the focus groups, under the direct leadership of the administration, are working in that direction.

b)   *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The administration and staff appear to have a profound dedication to promoting student achievement and success and a personal commitment to improving teaching techniques and developing programs to promote student success. Whether this commitment is due to the school-defined set of beliefs or the individual commitment of a decidedly professional staff, it is commended by the Visiting Team.

c)   *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The belief statement "Students can become life-long learners and productive citizens" can be tied directly to the DRSLs defining the traits that life-long learners should exhibit. The belief statements "Every student can learn, achieve and succeed," and "Students can become life-long learners and productive citizens" tie indirectly to the DRSLs specifying skills of effective communicators and critical thinkers. However, it is the Visiting Team's opinion that the other belief statements do not align directly to the school's desired results for student learning. The belief statements and DRSLs are concise, truthful, and definitively well-written. However, the school and department DRSLs could be more effective if they were more directly linked.

Curriculum Development:

a)   *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure that the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

Most class offerings are based on the current Utah Core Curriculum. Those classes without an applicable State Core are using a scope and sequence developed by departments, or one suggested by an appropriate state or national agency. The level of collaboration within departments varies widely. Interdepartmental collaboration on curriculum development is very limited and depends on the motivation of individuals.

Due to the trimester schedule, some departments have established a common end-of-trimester point of progress. This helps ensure that all students have a common core understanding when moving to the next trimester, no matter who taught the last one. Teachers may vary in some topics taught, but all cover the core concepts.

b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

Most of the curriculum development that has occurred appears to predate the school's self-evaluation efforts. Now that school and department DRSLs are in place, there is evidence that DRSLs-based decisions are beginning to drive school choices.

Quality Instructional Design:

a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

During the two-day visit, various instructional practices observed included lectures, direct instruction, verbal checking for understanding, quizzes, study guides, small group activities, rotating groups, teacher-led discussions, positive reinforcement, student presentations, multimedia presentations by students and teachers, hands-on laboratory experiences, safety review, student-initiated learning packets, and bookwork. The activities and instruction observed were in the context of excellent teaching. The Visiting Team observed the experienced and well-qualified faculty to be dedicated, hardworking, and committed to student success.

Department chairs stated that they meet on a regular basis to coordinate curricula and activities within their departments and reported some excellent examples of cross-curricular integration, such as the "civil rights through history and literature class" and efforts to incorporate reading and writing across the curriculum. The Visiting Team recommends that inservice efforts continue to help all staff feel comfortable with integrating reading strategies and the Six Traits writing method into their curriculum areas. Conversations between departments may provide

other opportunities to integrate curricula in a meaningful way to improve student learning.

b)   *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

The Visiting Team observed a variety of programs and strategies to help ensure that the needs of different learners are met. The success skills classes, targeting at-risk students and providing an intervention to help them stay in school and pass their classes, are very impressive. Since the school's data clearly indicates that sophomore boys are most at risk for failure, the reading classes for sophomores are an excellent example of using information obtained to provide individualized instruction and help for this population. The data collection and tracking through the Counseling Department are exemplary. The Visiting Team also commends the teachers who volunteer to help with this effort, and strongly recommends that funding continue to help make it possible to meet the needs of at-risk students.

The Resource and Transition Departments have incorporated inclusion with teaching assistants and peer tutors to provide an excellent program for their students. Students attend the regular classes where possible, but always with the support necessary to ensure success and provide a very positive experience for the students. Partners Club activities provide an exemplary tool to help severely disadvantaged students participate fully in high school and community life.

Cooperation with businesses in the community provides opportunities for students to succeed in the real world and boosts their skills and self-confidence. The hard work, dedication, and love that teachers and staff members show toward the students in their care was very evident to the Visiting Team; the Visiting Team recommends that support of these programs continue.

The variety of elective, honors, and Advanced Placement classes, in addition to opportunities provided by concurrent enrollment classes available through Utah State University—Uintah Basin, give excellent support to the high achieving student.

c)   *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

A variety of programs support student learning in addition to the regular classroom. Teachers are available between classes as well as before and after school. Attendance and academic tracking are consistent, and Saturday School provides opportunities for remediation. The Student Senate, Student Council, and a large variety of clubs and extracurricular activities all support academic learning. The Visiting Team suggests that an analysis of these various activities would help the school articulate exactly how they complement the mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs of the school, and may help provide insight to make them even more meaningful.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or schoolwide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Departments are using standard state and national tests. Some departments have developed end-of-trimester tests used for future student placement and remediation. Individual teachers are using a variety of formative and summative assessments, including research presentations, portfolios, competency-based projects, and daily assignments, as well as traditional pencil-and-paper quizzes and tests. The students seem well aware of what is expected and how they will be evaluated.

b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

Assessments seem to be appropriate to the purposes and stated standards of each class and department. The Visiting Team observed several different types of assessments being used in the various classrooms to help the teacher get a full picture of any student's progress.

c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

There is evidence of a widespread effort to administer standardized assessments in an inclusive manner. Additionally, appropriate adaptations and support are provided for students with special needs.

Leadership for School Improvement:

a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The leadership actively supports quality instruction and fosters a learning climate that promotes academic success. Currently, the administration is working to build strong teams that will continue to promote improvement in the teaching and learning environment. The Visiting Team believes the school leadership is committed to school improvement and providing opportunities for all students to improve academically. Ensuring the current leadership stays intact for a time period sufficient to accomplish this team building is critical to Uintah High School continuing the self-evaluation and improvement process.

b)   *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision-making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

Current decisions appear to be based upon research and sound education principles. The leadership is just beginning to use data as a basis for making decisions. There is a shared vision of the importance of collaborative efforts across the curriculum, but these efforts are just beginning. The Visiting Team recommends that the efforts to make collaborative and data-driven decisions continue.

c)   *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The school administers several comprehensive assessment tests, including the SAT, CRT, and other state-required tests; however, the data was not disaggregated to provide the information necessary to identify struggling groups. The school has hired an individual to monitor and report weekly on the academic progress of at-risk students. Individual departments assist in monitoring student progress by requiring prerequisite classes before entering more advanced classes and by remediating failing students.

d)   *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The school was clean and very well taken care of. Teachers seemed to have what they needed and wanted for their classrooms. The current leadership has in place safe disciplinary and school policies that are viewed as fair and equitable.

e)   *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

The DRSLs are relatively new and are beginning to be used for decision making and resource allocation.

f)   *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The school administration has empowered department heads to make decisions regarding curricula and course offerings. This delegation of authority has led to the development of quality programs that involve large numbers of students. The administration is beginning to foster cross-curricular collaboration that will strengthen current programs and improve the quality of instruction.

Community Building:

a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The Visiting Team was impressed with the sense of community among students, teachers, support staff, and administrators, and recognizes the positive and productive relationships among all the stakeholders that contribute to a positive school climate. There is strong evidence that this working relationship has created a learning environment for the students that provides a feeling of caring and belonging. The Visiting Team encourages the staff to continue their efforts to collaborate across departments to increase the sense of a single community and purpose.

b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

Uintah High School actively engages the business community through the Community Employment Placement Project (CEPP), which includes businesses that cooperate to provide learning and employment opportunities for resource and transition students. The full-time work-based learning coordinator assists in getting students into the community and currently supervises 112 junior and senior interns with over 100 cooperating businesses. Counselors actively involve parents in the SEOP and registration process. Articulation with the junior high school is accomplished through four-year planning and an orientation session in connection with registration.

The school has recently established a community council. The Visiting Team recommends continuing efforts to foster more parental involvement in the school improvement process by utilizing the community council and also by including more parents on the other school committees.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

Professional development opportunities are available to staff members who ask to attend various workshops or trainings in their content area. Many staff members are receiving ESL training, and staff members who have been trained in reading and writing across the curriculum are sharing that information with colleagues. The Visiting Team recommends that professional development opportunities be evaluated to determine where they support the DRSLs, and that a variety of staff

members take advantage of opportunities to improve their skills and share those ideas that will support the goals of the school.

b)   *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The Visiting Team observed that the leadership in the school fully supports the faculty, and the faculty appears to fully support the leadership of the school. Staff members report that the principal is the positive driving force for improvement and has the respect of the staff. Staff members also report that data is being used as never before, and that data will drive all policies in the future. The Visiting Team recommends that this data be made available to all stakeholders. Additional resources could also be accessed to disaggregate the data, making it more useful to the stakeholders.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (NASCU) STANDARDS I-X

Standard I – Educational Program

This standard is met sufficiently.

Standard II – Student Personnel Services

This standard is met. The ratio of counselors to students is only 12 over the limit. Services are above average.

Standard III – School Plant and Equipment

This standard is met sufficiently. Uintah High School has an above-average physical plant and is safe and well monitored.

Standard IV – Library Media Program

This standard is more than met. The media center and staffing are well above average.

Standard V – Records

This standard is met. The keeping of records is done safely and very responsively.

Standard VI – School Improvement (This is addressed in the self-study.)

This standard is sufficiently met by the school's self-study.

Standard VII – Preparation of Personnel

Not all personnel are in compliance with the certification requirements, but progress toward this goal is being made.

Standard VIII – Administration

This standard is adequately met. There are 3.5 full-time equivalency administrators. One administrator lacks the required preparation.

Standard IX – Teacher Load

This standard is adequately met. The student-to-professional staff ratio is 23:1.

Standard X – Activities

This standard is very impressively met. Activities are adequate and consistent with the school's mission statement.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

a)   *To what extent is the schoolwide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

Because the school's needs were so clearly identified in the self-study, it became obvious how the action plans could be aligned. This faculty and staff have a clear picture of themselves, and have made a credible and exemplary effort to formulate an action plan that is reasonable and effective.

b)   *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and systemwide?*

This administration is more than committed to the improvement process. There are many members of the faculty that have also been turned on to the process. The challenge they face is to continue encouraging parents to become involved and to nurture those faculty members who are not completely convinced that this process is valuable. They all understand that this is only the beginning of a long, enduring process.

c)   *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?*

The principal has great skill and a good understanding of this process. She is very capable of knowing where to get the data needed and how to convince a faculty to use it. The faculty understands that the process is only in its infancy, and they have a strong desire to see this improvement effort become the driving force behind the school's improvement steps. Faculty members who need more encouragement are getting it.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- Class offerings are broad and varied.

- The staff has made a commendable effort to support the school improvement process, and is ready to implement the action plan.

- The Visiting Team has observed many very positive programs to develop student leadership skills.

- Teachers are implementing a variety of teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students.

- Stakeholders demonstrate a sense of ownership of their school and programs, as evidenced by the condition and cleanliness of the physical facility.

- Technology is available and is used to engage students in learning across the curriculum.

Recommendations:

- Uintah High School should continue to encourage all stakeholders to utilize the accreditation process as the means for school improvement.

- The school should take a more specific look at the departmental DRSLs and align them directly to the school DRSLs and belief statements.

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to encourage more parental involvement through the use of the community council and other public relations efforts.